

ADULT AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION^{IN NSW}

www.ace.nsw.gov.au



ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS WORKING
TOGETHER TO PROVIDE EDUCATIONAL CHOICES



CONNECT → ACHIEVE → SUCCEED → CONNECT → ACHIEVE → SUCCEED → CONNECT → ACHIEVE → SUCCEED →

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research which has informed this report was conducted by Dr Kaye Bowman on behalf of the Adult and Community Education (ACE) Unit in the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET).

Dr Kaye Bowman and the ACE Unit wish to thank the community colleges and school staff who made the research possible by participating in interviews and opening their youth programs up to scrutiny. We would also like to thank all those colleges who participated in the survey and individuals who contributed as commentators, editors, designers and desktop publishers.

To everyone involved a big thank you for your time, skills, thinking and energy.

**ADULT AND
COMMUNITY
EDUCATION**
NSW
www.ace.nsw.gov.au

COMMUNITY COLLEGE INTERVIEWEES

Andrea Cingi – General Manager Tuggerah Lakes Community College

Rowan Cox – Coordinator of the ALESCO Program WEA Hunter

Erifili Davis – Western College

Brett Gleeson – former Executive Director Hunter Community College

Ben Grushka – Executive Director WEA Hunter

Kerry Johnson – Principal ACE North Coast Inc.

Cherie Rivas – Manager Training Services Central West Community College

Helen Zwicker – Kiama Community College Inc

NSW DET INTERVIEWEES

Mitch Grove – Kiama High School

Donald Harvey – Principal of Wellington High School and former Partnership Mentor for the Bourke Schools Education Group

Anne Marceau – e2 Network Coordinator and Orange High School

Pam Ryan – former Senior Project Officer New School Leaving Age – NSW DET

PHOTOGRAPHY

Photography in this document is drawn from NSW community colleges, schools and TAFE.

Photography of TAFE NSW students is supplied by TAFE NSW Corporate Relations and Media.

February 2011

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
INTRODUCTION	5
The project	5
Policy drivers	5
Research method	5
SECTION 1: THE EDUCATION-TO-WORK CHALLENGE	7
Required education levels	7
The importance of youth engagement with education	7
The number of youth at risk	8
Reasons youth disengage from school	9
SECTION 2: EFFECTIVE YOUTH EDUCATION-TO-WORK SYSTEMS	11
Key elements	11
Wide range of study options	12
Range of learning environments	13
Good guidance and support systems	14
Tailored programs coherently linked	15
SECTION 3: COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND YOUTH EDUCATION	19
Study options available in NSW community colleges	19
Young people as clients of community colleges	19
Community colleges and educationally disengaged youth	20
Working with young people at risk of disengaging from school	21
Community college guidance and support systems	22
The community college learning environment	23
SECTION 4: CASE STUDIES	25
Case study 1 Alesco schools	25
Case study 2 College and school partnerships	29
Case study 3 Creating positive school experiences for non academic students	31
Case study 4 Engaging the community to lift student retention and outcomes	34
SECTION 5: ROLES FOR NSW COMMUNITY COLLEGES	37
We know what works: it is a matter of making it work	37
Roles for community colleges	37
Barriers to fully embracing education-to-work roles	38
Conclusion	39
SECTION 6: REFERENCES	41

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Community colleges in NSW provide courses and services to people over 15 years of age. They deliver accredited training, have strong local networks and are committed to social inclusion principles. They can therefore play an important role in working with young people.

This report examines the roles that community colleges play in providing programs to young people who require additional assistance to stay engaged with education and training and to make successful transitions to the workforce. It draws on research undertaken in 2010 as part of the Youth Strategies Project developed by the Adult and Community Education (ACE) Unit in the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET).

The report presents a range of examples of youth-related approaches to education and training within the Adult and Community Education (ACE) sector, including case studies that emphasise the role community colleges can play when working with local communities and public high schools. Community colleges provide various options for young people who are not thriving in the mainstream school environment. These range from the provision of alternative independent schools through to programs where students attend a community college one day a week and continue normal schooling on the other days.

Although NSW has not yet developed a coherent youth education-to-work transition system, the necessary elements are clear and the report illustrates key elements of a successful system. The research shows young people are likely to thrive in a system where there is a wide range of study options and learning environments, good guidance and support systems that are customised to the individual and provide goal

setting via pathway planning. Community colleges provide programs that encompass these elements and are developing new approaches to these facets of a successful education-to-work transition system.

For the significant minority of young people who require assistance to remain connected with education and training, public high school and community college partnerships are one way of ensuring that programs are developed according to local needs and conditions and that all young people benefit from their years of education.

INTRODUCTION

This section provides background on the Youth Strategies 2010 Project and associated research undertaken by the Adult and Community Education Unit in the NSW Department of Education and Training.

The project

The *Youth Strategies 2010 Project* provided additional funding to selected colleges that were already delivering education programs to at-risk youth. The Project aims were to:

- encourage the growth of partnerships between community colleges and local high schools
- provide opportunities to customise programs to help maximise student success and outcomes
- share the results of initiatives with other colleges to assist them to build their own local programs
- build the capacity of NSW community colleges to work with other local stakeholders to ensure all young people remain engaged in education and make a successful transition to work.

The Project included a research component to identify guidance and support mechanisms that could assist successful engagement in education and transitions to work for vulnerable young people. The objective was to define the broad roles for community colleges in youth-related social inclusion programs.

Policy drivers

The *Youth Strategies 2010 Project* was developed in response to the legislated change in the NSW compulsory school leaving age in 2009 (NSW Education Amendment Act No. 25). From 1 January 2010 all students in the state must complete Year 10 and continue in education and training until the age of 17 years, or be in full-time work. Students can also be engaged in a combination of education, training and employment. It was estimated that around 3 000 young people, who previously would have left school, would be affected by this legislative change. The change in the school-leaving age opened up the opportunity to focus on innovation in NSW public high schools (Mitchell 2009) and for NSW community colleges to work with local schools.

The role of community colleges is underpinned by National and NSW State ACE policies that stress the importance of working to promote social inclusion in education and

work for all groups, including young people. The role of community colleges in promoting social inclusion for those young people who need extra assistance to stay engaged with education and training and ultimately transition to the workforce is underpinned by:

- the *2008 Ministerial Declaration on ACE* (MCEETYA 2008) that commits governments to working with ACE providers to build their capability to engage disadvantaged Australians in education and pathways to further education and training and/or paid work
- the national workforce productivity and participation agenda that also specifies a firm role for ACE in social-inclusion strategies
- the *2007 NSW Government Statement on Community Education* that recognises the key role ACE providers play in closing the gap between the skills-rich and skills-poor, which involves finding suitable pathways and educational choices for young people who are not thriving in the mainstream school system.

Research method

Data for the research were gathered from journals, books, policy documents, statistical records, program documents, semi-structured interviews and a survey of community colleges. The research was conducted in four phases:

PHASE 1:

Selected Australian and international literature on young people's education-to-work transitions was reviewed to determine critical success factors and to help identify effective strategies.

PHASE 2:

A survey of NSW community colleges was undertaken to identify current youth programs and to document key strengths and issues faced when working with young people. Twenty-two out of 51 colleges responded to the survey.

PHASE 3:

Case examples from college youth education programs were developed to illustrate a range of schooling-related choices that community colleges can offer.



SECTION 1

THE EDUCATION-TO-WORK CHALLENGE

This section presents a synopsis of selected research from Australia and overseas on the challenge of ensuring that all young people achieve in education and make a successful transition to work. The threshold levels of education required by youth are identified and the consequences of not attaining these levels are explained. This section also looks at how many young people are likely to face difficulties and the key reasons difficulties occur.

The challenge of ensuring that all young people remain in education long enough to make a successful transition to work is not new. However, the transition from education to full-time work has become increasingly difficult for young people over the past two to three decades. This is because the world of work has been changing. Jobs have been transforming in the emerging knowledge economy and now require higher levels of knowledge and skills to obtain (Dusseldorp Skills Forum Report 2009).

For everyone involved - young people, parents, teachers, principals, many employers and most communities - the decisions each student makes during Years 9 to 12 about what to do at school, whether to stay on or to go, and then what to, are powerful.

(Kellock 2003: 4)

REQUIRED EDUCATION LEVELS

To ensure all young people make a successful transition to work the statistical evidence is clear that attainment of a senior secondary school (Year 12) certificate qualification or its equivalent is required. Studies show a Year 12 Certificate increases the likelihood of gaining good employment outcomes and/or undertaking further study. Young people who do not complete Year 12 are more likely to experience multiple periods of time outside the workforce and are less likely to engage in further education or training after leaving school (Hillman 2005, Dusseldorp Skills Forum Report 2009).

Studies also show that a vocational Certificate III is equivalent to a Year 12 qualification (AQF Council 2010) and assists in reaching sustainable job outcomes and good wages. While vocational Certificate I and II qualifications may yield job outcomes, for most young people they are best seen as stepping stones to higher level qualifications to ensure job security (Stanwick 2005).

In April 2009 all governments of Australia agreed that young people should attain these threshold levels of initial education and stay engaged in combinations of education

and training and employment until the age of 17 years and they set the following targets (National Compact with Young Australians 2009):

- From 2010, all young people up to 17 years of age must be participating in education, training or work or a combination of these.
- By 2015, 90% of young people 20 to 24 years old are to have achieved a Year 12 Certificate or a Certificate II or above qualification - an increase from 74% in 2007.
- By 2020, 90% of young people 20 to 24 years old are to have achieved a Year 12 Certificate or a Certificate III or above qualification.

All governments also agreed that young people would be provided with education entitlements until 24 years of age (Council of Australian Governments 2009). In NSW, the new national youth education targets triggered a legislative change in the compulsory school leaving age from 15 to 17 years, which was implemented from 1 January 2010.

THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN EDUCATION

Australian youth who disengage early from education risk more than just poor job prospects. They also risk total social exclusion with wide negative consequences. Young people who are not studying and/or working are less likely to be involved in a range of social and civic activities. According to the Office for Youth (2009) these young people are:

- less likely to have internet access
- more likely to spend less time with friends
- less likely to feel safe
- more likely to smoke
- less likely to engage in exercise
- more likely to experience a mental disorder.

They also experience more financial and personal stress, have lower levels of participation and integration with civil society and are less satisfied with their lives (Long 2006). Teenagers who are not fully engaged in education or employment express far less satisfaction with their lives and are not happy about their career prospects (Dusseldorp Skills Forum Report 2009).

There are several OECD countries with higher education completion rates than Australia (Dusseldorp Skills Forum Report 2009). As well as having far-reaching individual consequences, there are also broader social and economic implications when young people do not make successful education-to-work transitions. The ageing of the Australian population is shrinking the numbers of working-age people relative to dependants. Young people are a source of the required increase in Australia's workforce participation rates and international comparisons show that there is scope to boost school or equivalent completion rates in Australia. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) new youth education targets need to be achieved to improve Australia's economic competitiveness and social cohesion. A recent European study (CEDEFOP 2010) calculated the personal, social and economic costs of a young person's failure in education and work. These costs are presented here where higher and lower are defined relative to a control group of non-school failure.

Personal

- Higher unemployment incidence and unemployment duration
- Higher personal discount rate ie: valuing money tomorrow less than money today and therefore being less willing to invest in human or other capital
- Lower initial and lifetime earnings and lower personal health status
- Less risk aversion and lifelong learning participation
- Lower lifetime satisfaction

Social

- Increased criminality
- Lower positive spillover effects on coworkers and lower rates of economic growth
- Lower intergenerational effects on children and parents, lower public health status and lower social cohesion
- Higher unemployment

Fiscal

- Lower tax revenues and higher social benefit payments
- Higher police and criminal justice expenditure

THE NUMBER OF YOUTH AT RISK

It is difficult to determine how many young Australians are at risk of not making a successful transition to work but

it can be estimated they form a significant minority. Many young people no longer follow a traditional education-to-work pathway, moving from high school to full-time work or post-secondary studies that provide a transition to the job market. Today young people tend to have more fluid transitions that can take up to the age of 24 years to complete. Many combine part-time work with education and Australia is among the small group of OECD countries with relatively high levels of students combining school and work (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training 2009). Other young people take time out from work or study to travel, start a family, care for others or take part in other meaningful activities.

At any one time, about one quarter of young people from the ages of 15 to 24 years are not participating in full-time employment or studying. Many, however, do go on to achieve satisfactory education and labour market outcomes by their mid-20s. The Longitudinal Survey of Australian Youth shows that it is a small proportion (less than 10%) who are genuinely at risk of long-term social exclusion (Anlezark forthcoming).

The Australian Fair Pay Commission has concluded there is a persistent significant minority of teenagers at risk of poor labour-market outcomes with the associated negative consequences. Using 2008 data, The Commission considered various definitions of at-risk young people and estimated how many fall into each definition (Pech, McNevin & Nelms 2009). Two definitions, with 2008 best estimates of the teenage population at risk are:

→ Teenagers who are unemployed

Since 1993 to the end of 2008 the rate has remained relatively high at around 12%.

→ Teenagers not in employment, education or training (NEET)

The rate shows improvement over recent years, in accord with the economic cycle. Since peaking in the early 1990s at 14% for young men and almost 15% for young women, it has fallen steadily to around 8% and 9%, respectively.

In 2009, there was a rise in the percentage of Australian teenagers not fully engaged in learning or earning because of the global financial crisis and the consequent downturn in the labour market. However, this was not offset by an increase in educational participation. It is important to note young people are among the first to feel the effects of changes in the economy (Dusseldorp Skills Forum Report 2009).

Figure 1: Student achievement variance: factors by percentage

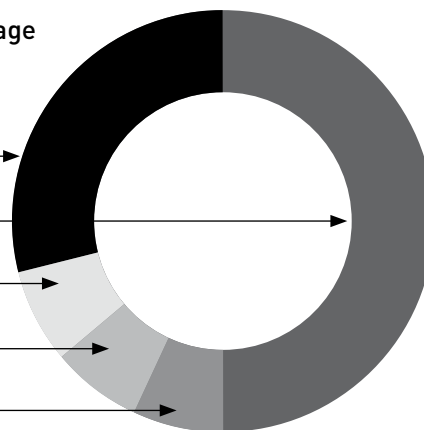
29% Teachers

50% Students

7% School

7% Home

7% Peers



REASONS YOUTH DISENGAGE FROM SCHOOL

Many studies have investigated why young people disengage from school. These studies have revealed a wide variety of factors that often interrelate. A comprehensive overview of all the major influences, both positive and negative that theoretically could determine a young person's status with respect to education, has been compiled by US researchers. The factors are combined into five groups: personal attributes, family attributes, peer group influences and school and community environments (Institute for the Study of Students at Risk 2004). The relative importance of each factor has been determined through hierarchical linear modelling. Findings are shown in Figure 1 (reported in Hattie 2003). It has been determined that school factors, and especially the quality of teaching, account for around one-third of the difference in school retention and successful student outcomes. The large remainder of the difference can be attributed to individual factors linked to family and community environments.

Research from Australia shows comparable proportioning of variance. A multilevel analysis of 2000 Australian scholastic performances (2003 and 2006) of 15-year-old school pupils found that school makes around 20% to 30% difference in student performance. Around 80% of differences are located between students within schools (Lietz 2009). Other qualitative Australian research suggests lack of motivation or low achievement related to the traditional school curriculum is an important factor explaining why young people drop out of school. Perceived poor student-teacher relationships are also important and a compilation of research findings found that:

- more than one-half of school leavers say they were unhappy with school (McMillan & Marks 2003)
- a lack of interest in schoolwork is one of the largest single motives for dropping out, particularly when for young males this is combined with low achievement levels (Teese, Polesel & Mason 2003)
- the quality of programs, experiences and learning in schools are key factors leading to early school leaving (Lamb, Rumberger, Jesseon & Teese 2004)
- common reasons given for having left school, without completing Year 12, include positive reasons like having/wanting a job or apprenticeship to go to, and negative reasons like not liking school and perceiving poor student-teacher relationships, poor teacher morale and poor student behaviour (Curtis & McMillan 2008)

All Australian students surveyed in 2009 emphasised the importance of good relationships and communication between students and educators, and indicated they would like to receive more formative feedback from their teachers and/or lecturers. They also indicated they would like greater variety and more interesting learning approaches, more personalised learning that caters for their individual requirements and the opportunity for individual help (Moyle & Owen 2009).

Data from the United States also indicate the key reasons students drop out of school are low achievement levels combined with lack of interest in the available learning opportunities. When students are grouped by the key reasons they dropped out of school, six different categories emerge (Dwyer 1996, Janosz et al 2000, Institute for the Study of Students at Risk 2006). The categories of early school leavers are:

- **Positive leavers** who leave early because of a positive choice to take up a job or apprenticeship/traineeship or some other career path
- **Opportune leavers** who take the opportunity to leave school on finding a job or establishing a personal relationship perceived as preferable to school, with no career pathway chosen
- **Would-be leavers and potential fade-outs** who are reluctant stayers at school and who may have okay academic achievement, typically do not react openly to their difficulties in school, do not misbehave and generally go unnoticed but at some point become frustrated or bored and stop seeing the reason for coming to school and leave
- **Circumstantial and life-event leavers** who are forced out of school for non-educational reasons, because of something that happens outside of school, for example, becoming pregnant, getting arrested or having to support family members
- **Discouraged failing-to-succeed leavers** who have not had success in the school environment and have low educational achievement
- **Alienated leavers** who are discouraged and have had difficulties academically, behaviourally and motivationally and have been subtly or not so subtly encouraged to withdraw from school.



SECTION 2

EFFECTIVE YOUTH EDUCATION TO WORK SYSTEMS

This section outlines the five key elements of an effective youth education-to-work transition system as determined from Australian and international research.

KEY ELEMENTS

An effective national transition service must be designed to assist young people on an individual basis, and be able to provide preparatory, planning, support and follow-up services to meet their particular needs ... A universal service is required. However, within the design should be the capacity to direct intensive resources for those at risk, while a less intensive level of resources is needed to assist those with lower levels of vulnerability. Young people may move between the general and the at risk populations as a result of particular experiences at a point in time.

[Kellock 2003:38]

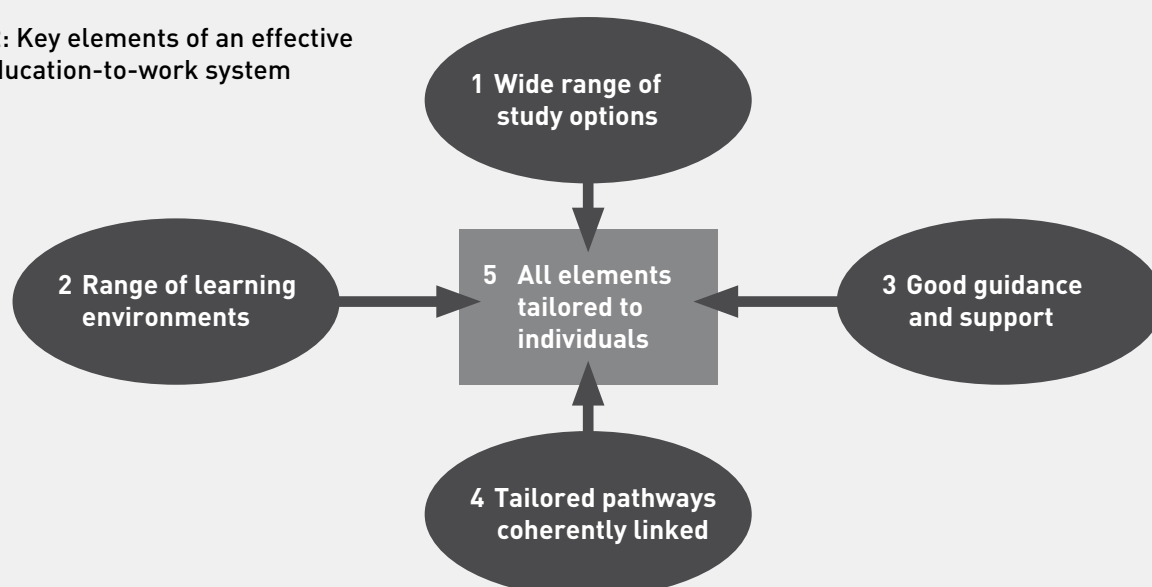
The increasing difficulty for young people of making a smooth transition from school to work began to be widely appreciated in the 1990s and led the OECD to review the transition systems in fourteen member countries,

including Australia. The pre-requisites for an effective transition system identified by the OECD (1999) are:

- a healthy economy
- well organised pathways that connect initial education to work or further study and provide widespread opportunities for combining study with workplace experience
- tightly knit safety nets for those at risk
- good information and guidance systems
- the provision of effective institutions and processes.

In Australia, the 2001 Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan identified a similar set of principles for improving young people's education-to-job transitions and called for demonstration projects. A report on the projects suggested that an individual client focus, within a universal youth education-to-work transitions system, is preferable to streaming students as either mainstream or at risk. Division into these categories can be detrimental as it can miss picking up young people whose circumstances change and who therefore should cross the divide. Figure 2 presents the five essential elements of an effective transition system, which are discussed below.

Figure 2: Key elements of an effective youth education-to-work system



1 WIDE RANGE OF STUDY OPTIONS

Australia has focused strongly on widening the range of study options available to young people. The traditional academic school curriculum has been progressively broadened to cater for the changing student population. VET in schools is now common in all Australian state and territory senior schooling programs. It comprises VET programs and School-based New Apprenticeships, as part of a more flexible Senior Secondary School Certificate (SSSC). This approach appeals to less academically inclined students (Woods 2007).

In NSW, TAFE Institutes are the dominant providers of VET in schools, which can assist a student to transition to a TAFE qualification once they have completed school. Recently revised Senior Secondary School Certificates allow for an even wider set of study options. The new Certificates of Education in Queensland (QCE), Tasmania (TCE) and South Australian (SACE) allow and allocate credits for learning through senior-school subjects, VET, workplace and community learning, and in one instance university subjects undertaken while at school (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training October 2009b).

Victoria has the Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) introduced in 2003 which enables students to select accredited Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) and VET modules and units from compulsory strands including literacy and numeracy skills, work-related skills, industry specific skills and personal development. There is also an option to transfer from the VCAL to a Victorian School Certificate of Education. In addition Victoria has a Certificate in General Education for Adults (CGEA) providing a qualification equivalent to Year 10 schooling. Many community colleges in NSW also deliver the CGEA.

Some researchers have documented innovation occurring in NSW public high schools. Mitchell (2009) presents twelve case studies that illustrate a range of themes including pathways development, working with industry and ways to work with at-risk young people. Helme et al (2005) noted that the frameworks, within which NSW schools operate, are constraining and make innovation difficult. They conclude NSW curriculum is not flexible enough to deal with the needs of all learners.

VET options for young people are being delivered by TAFE and also by other providers including public trade schools, private providers in niche markets and some ACE providers, with ACE RTOs concentrated in NSW and Victoria (Bowman 2010).

2 RANGE OF LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

While schools meet the needs of most young people, they have not retained a significant minority to the completion of Year 12. This calculates to an average loss of 2.5 students in every 10. In 2008, the retention rate of Australian school students from Years 7 and 8 to Year 12 was 74.5%. For NSW the figure was 69.6%, which means that three in every 10 school students drop out (ABS schools data in Dusseldorp Skills Forum Report 2009).

The evidence suggests VET in schools does not necessarily increase the retention rates to Year 12 but it does increase participation in school from Year 10 to Year 11. It also has positive effects on attitudes to and satisfaction with Year 11 study. However, after Year 11, many students studying VET in schools leave. For a small group of students who are intent on getting a job straight after school, participation in VET programs can change their post-school plans to include further VET study or an apprenticeship or traineeship (Nguyen 2010).

It is clear that focusing on Year 12 completion will not work for all students. For young people who do not thrive at school and are not succeeding, or for those who have disengaged, delivering mainstream programs in a school environment is unlikely to succeed. This means that non-school providers need to offer alternative educational environments for these young people. Studies (eg: Wyn, Stokes & Tyler 2004) show that both TAFE and ACE systems have become increasingly important for early school leavers who like these systems because of:

- the relationships formed between staff and students
- the flexibility in modes of delivery
- the choice of study areas
- the autonomy and being treated like adults

However, another Victorian report (Phillips 2006: 62) noted:

Stakeholders suggest that a paradox often exists with students who are early school leavers in that they often have behavioural and social and emotional issues which non-school providers, particularly TAFE, find that they are not equipped to manage. Non-school provision is premised on the basis that training is delivered within an adult learning environment where behaviour is governed by social mores where the individual accepts responsibility for managing their own behaviour. Whilst rejecting the structure and discipline associated with schools, these same students do not cope in an environment that does not have the structures and systems in place to nurture and respond to the needs of young people with varying degrees of maturity.

Volkoff and Walstab (2007) compared TAFE and ACE sectors in Victoria and drew some comparative strengths of ACE, which include:

- ACE is an accessible sector able to effectively engage the most educationally disadvantaged learners.
- ACE provision is distinctive in style through its use of effective adult learning pedagogies, commonly supplemented with wide ranging support for the non-educational issues of learners, which can be offered either in-house or brokered through community agencies.
- ACE is a connected sector with its providers engaging with local government, schools, other VET providers and community support agencies to both reach prospective learners and effectively deliver and support education and training.
- ACE is a cost-effective sector with diversified funding, low-cost community infrastructure, flat administrative structures and volunteer staff contributions, matched with high levels of learner satisfaction, strong course completion rates and employment outcomes.

This Victorian study suggests that the ACE sector needs to grow to address the expanding education and training needs of groups in the community that other education and training sectors choose not to or cannot serve for various reasons such as not being located where a need exists or using resources to meet other priorities.

3 GOOD GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Guiding at-risk youth through learning to work (CEDEFOP 2010) is a European study which demonstrates guidance is indispensable in assisting timely education-to-work transitions for all young people, but especially at-risk groups. There are a variety of guidance and support services that can help young people to stay on track and persist in their education-to-work transition. The three key ones are:

a Individual education-to-work pathway plans

The development of an individual student-learning plan that is linked to work aspirations has been found to aid student engagement with education. Here active participation by the young person in the decision-making process is the key to success. All young people need to be equipped to negotiate and navigate their own pathways, which requires a quality career guidance program (OECD 2002). It is becoming common for Australian school students to be supported to plan their senior learning at the end of Year 10. Naturally, what pathways are negotiated depends on what pathways are available and the nature of the career guidance offered. As noted by Phillips (2006) choices are very different when made with knowledge, information, motivation and a reason to be continuing towards a goal.

b Mentoring

Mentoring has been described as a planned, intentional and committed relationship between an adult (the mentor) and a young person, with specific aims including developing generic competencies, career prospects and social skills. The objectives of mentoring often include encouraging the young person to stay in the education and training system, improving attitudes to study and encouragement to be more socially responsible and to adopt more cooperative and productive behaviours in work (Kellock 2005). Mentoring is given prominence in the CEDEFOP report with many case examples provided of formal mentoring systems in place for youth in various European countries.

c Case management

Case management is a collaborative process of assessment, planning, facilitation and advocacy for options and services to meet an individual's needs through communication and available resources to promote quality cost effective outcomes (Case Management Society of Australia: <http://www.cmsa.org.au/definition.html>). The case-management approach assumes that clients, with complex and multiple needs, will access services from a range of service providers and the goal is to achieve seamless service delivery. Case management crosses organisational boundaries to ensure service provision is client focused. Case managers provide the coordinating and specialist activities that flow from particular settings, programs and client populations. Possible case-management roles for at-risk youth in educational settings (from Kellock 2003) include:

- providing encouragement for students to remain at school
- finding a viable alternative option such as full-time employment, a TAFE place or an apprenticeship for school leavers before they leave school and assisting them to continue at school until this has occurred
- helping students to access services and advice about health, family, housing, welfare and related issues
- complementing the roles of career teachers, student welfare and pathways planning functions by working both within and outside the school
- monitoring and following up early leavers to ensure they are in a stable situation
- brokering and advocating stand-alone support services provided to young people at key transition points.

4 TAILORED PATHWAYS COHERENTLY LINKED

Individually tailored programs

In an effective youth education-to-work transition system learning options, environments and guidance supports should all be tailored to the individual in order to meet their distinct interests, needs and circumstances. For those young people in school, but at risk of disengaging, many specific studies have been done to determine the critical success factors for keeping them in school. One study summarises this as the right combination of study options along with guidance and support within a positive learning environment. The study (Davis, Forstadt & Lee 2006: 67) suggests that:

what at risk students require to help them graduate is really quite simple. They need: to believe in themselves and their abilities; to perceive a sense of relevance, importance, meaningfulness, and value in their curriculum; to feel respected, valued, and connected within their school culture; to have a plan in place that provides them with the direction and the hope that their goals are doable and attainable; to receive the academic, emotional/behavioural and social supports that they require; and to be taught by competent, caring teachers.

Similar findings appear in studies outlining ways to successfully re-engage young people who have already disengaged from school. Four key studies in this area are:

- a an American youth policy forum report on how twelve communities are reconnecting out-of-school youth to education, employment and civic life (Halperin 2006)
- b an Australian study of young people involved in re-entry to education programs in TAFE and ACE settings (Wyn, Stokes & Tyler 2004)
- c research done on the South Australian Learn to Earn pilot program for disengaged students from a range of backgrounds (Fergusson & Young 2005)
- d work by the Melbourne City Mission [MCM] with young people who have left school early and prior to Year 10 (James 2005)

These studies recognise the need for action to ensure program sustainability and outline the following good program design principles of a consensual participation plan:

Learning options

- Real-world career-oriented options with an eye to local employer needs but if student interests lie elsewhere then go with their interests and emphasise the transferability of the skills they develop to other contexts
- Training content featuring personal development, life skills and group work combined with practical incentives
- Programs within an accredited framework or that link to mainstream accredited programs

Learning delivery

- Staff with skills in working flexibly and as facilitators/coaches, with participants viewed as adults who have goals which the staff will help them to achieve through close informal relationships
- Open entry and exit points with flexible scheduling including choices of times and a mix of academic and hands-on fieldwork within the one day, and formal breaks in the program
- Low staff-to-student ratios eg: one to two staff for fifteen learners

Guidance and support

- Clear codes of conduct understood by all staff and students with consistent enforcement and positive rewards not punitive discipline
- Strong coordinated and timely student support services
- Supported referral to the program

Program sustainability

- Support for staff through suitable well-being strategies to overcome compassion fatigue
- A project steering group to formalise business and community partnerships and identify strategies (including funding) to make the program sustainable

The general principle emerging from youth education retention studies is that the more vulnerable young people are the more they require real-world, career-oriented curricula. They also require a more flexible and learner-directed learning environment and more comprehensive guidance and support.

In Australia there is growing recognition of this principle as reflected in the increasing use of a learning-disadvantage approach to youth educational provision. The successful Youth Engagement Innovative Community Action Networks (ICANs) initiative from South Australia provides one example. This initiative has developed and

implemented a flexible enrolment strategy known as Flexible Learning Options (FLO) for those young people who require additional support in order to remain at school and then embark on learning-to-work pathways (SA DECS 2004). The strategy uses a four-level youth segment model (see Table 1 below). From 2009, ICANs has been progressively expanded across South Australia as part of the Federal Government's Low SES Schools National Partnership component of the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions (Council of Australian Governments 2009).

Table 1: Youth segments and strategies framework of the Innovative Community Action Networks of South Australia

	Early intervention	Keep on track	Keep connected	Re-engage
Risk profile	At some risk of leaving school	Some attendance issues	Habitual attendance issues	Completely disengaged/ school refusal
Engagement objective	Focus on literacy and social skills	Accredited learning in school and community	Accredited learning in school, RTOs or workplaces	Engagement in pre-accredited learning first, if necessary
Learning objective	School-based via flexible plan	Mainly school – some community-based	Some school-based but more community-based	Community-based programs
Services Strategies	School-based with support tutoring and mentoring	Brokering in and out of school support via youth worker	Pathway guidance – case managed via youth agency	Intensive case management over extended time

The *National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions* (2009) acknowledges that there is a spread of young people requiring a continuum of increasing levels of support within its Youth Connection Services component.

The national Youth Connections Service is to provide an improved safety net for young people. It will be flexible, offering a combination of case-managed support as well as linkages with wider community activities to help young people to reconnect with education or training and build resilience, skills and attributes that promote positive choices and wellbeing. Case management services will be tailored to the continuum of young people at risk: young people at risk of disengaging; young people disengaging or who have recently disengaged and severely disengaged young people.

Victoria has also proposed a conceptual model that places youth into four vulnerability levels as a new policy direction within its youth education-to-work transition system (Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2010).

Pathways coherently linked

Another element of an effective youth education-to-work transition system is the establishment of coherent linkages between available youth education options. This requires cross education provider relationships and referral systems which in turn requires networking and partnering. Tracking of young people to ensure they access a region's integrated youth education-to-work transitions is also recommended.

Networking and partnering

Partnerships between education providers and the wider local community can increase the resources available to students and help establish linkages between organisations. At the state or territory level successful youth education-to-work transition networks include South Australia's Innovative Community Action Networks (ICANS) and the older Victorian Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs).

The Victorian Local Learning and Employment Networks were established in 2001 to provide broader education, training and employment options for young people. They use knowledge of local opportunities, needs and issues, networks with employers, training and education providers, agencies and individuals to set up programs. Collectively they have achieved 86 new partnerships that have provided assistance to 21 359 young people. Around 2 300 young people who were disengaged from education and training have been re-engaged. The networks use an On Track Connect process to identify relevant young people and to track numbers of young people assisted. These networks are now an integral component of education and training provision in Victoria. The Commonwealth and the Victorian Governments have agreed that the new national Youth Partnership Brokers Program in Victoria will be delivered through (enhanced) Local Learning and Employment Networks. For more information go to: <http://www.llen.vic.gov.au>

The National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions Program acknowledges the need to strengthen regional youth services via its School Business Community Partnership Brokers component.

School Business Community Partnership Brokers are required to improve community and business engagement with schools. They aim to assist schools to extend learning beyond the classroom, increase student engagement, lift attainment and improve educational outcomes. This involves fostering a strategic, whole of community approach among four key stakeholder groups: education and training providers, business and industry, parent and family groups and community groups.

Student tracking

A student-tracking system can assist success in a whole-of-community or integrated pathways approach to youth education-to-work transitions. In the system one local agency can take the lead by being formally responsible for participating individuals. Student tracking is useful because it enables ongoing contact if a student is at risk of opting out of education. Responsibility can be passed to the most suitable agency to facilitate the young person's reintegration into school, transition to a VET program or into employment (Kellock 2003).



SECTION 3

COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND YOUTH EDUCATION

This section provides an overview of NSW community college involvement in youth education. The section draws on the results of a survey in which 22 community colleges participated, data from college annual reports and information from specific project reports. The section includes a range of short examples illustrating the roles community colleges play in relation to young people

STUDY OPTIONS AVAILABLE IN NSW COMMUNITY COLLEGES

ACE providers across Australia are autonomous not-for-profit organisations that design and deliver educational programs in response to current social trends and the needs and demands of their local communities. They have evolved significantly in recent times. Originally they delivered hobby and recreation courses and then added basic language and literacy courses. Some time later they commenced delivery of vocational education and training courses, however, the move to VET delivery is more advanced in some states than others (Walstab et al 2005, Bowman 2006).

In New South Wales all but five of 51 community colleges are RTOs able to deliver accredited VET and accredited language literacy and numeracy, as well as the more traditional personal-enrichment programs (general ACE). ACE providers in Victoria also offer this broad range of education options.

YOUNG PEOPLE AS CLIENTS OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES

NSW community colleges also work with significant numbers of young people. Table 2 presents the 2009 data on youth participation in the network of NSW community colleges, which has remained largely consistent since 2005.

	VET	LLN	General ACE	All ACE
Students	17.2%	22.1%	9.2%	13.2%
Community	16.6%	16.6%	16.6%	16.6%

Table 2: 2009 NSW community college participation rates for 15 to 24 years

Figure 3 outlines community college data for the participation of 15 to 24 year olds in community college programs in comparison to their numbers in the general community.

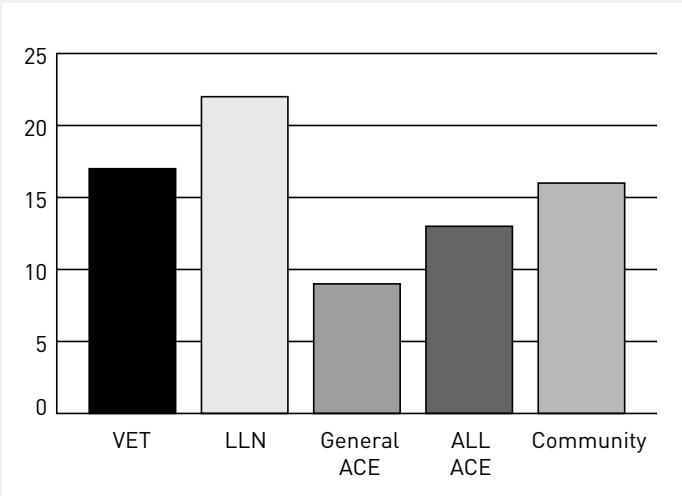


Figure 3: Comparison of NSW youth population and their participation in programs

The participation data show that:

- young people participate in VET programs at levels equal to their representation in the NSW community
- young people participate in accredited language, literacy and numeracy courses in greater numbers than their representation in the NSW community
- significant numbers of young people also engage in the leisure and recreation (general ACE) programs run by the colleges
- the numbers of 15 to 19 year olds participating in college programs are comparable to the numbers of 20 to 24 year olds participating (see Table 3)

Age group	VET	LLN	ACE
15-19 years	4 218	396	2 113
20-24 years	4 608	310	3 950

Table 3: NSW 2008 Community College numbers for youth groups

The data also show that of the 22 colleges that responded to the survey most have some experience with school-aged youth, as seen in Table 4. Three colleges reported no involvement with school-aged children, with two of these colleges reporting that their funding arrangements did not allow for this provision.

None	Some	A lot
3	13	6

Table 4: NSW Community colleges experience with 15 to 17 year olds

COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND EDUCATIONALLY DISENGAGED YOUTH

Community colleges provide VET to industry standards and the quality standards required of all registered training providers. They therefore also cater to young people motivated to be in education who require a VET qualification. Colleges currently provide accredited VET to the general population of young people outside of school. Community colleges can also play a role within the formal VET in schools program system.

The majority of young clients in community colleges are highly disadvantaged youth. Colleges work with all groups of highly vulnerable young people, including those who are unemployed, underemployed, in the juvenile justice system, requiring Year 10 or equivalent schooling, the homeless and early school leavers. They also often work with young Aboriginal people and young migrants. Colleges successfully engage early school leavers in a wide range of education programs including:

- the Certificate in General Education for Adults (CGEA)
- accredited language/literacy/numeracy programs
- the Certificates in Spoken and Written English (CSWE)
- employability and leadership skills
- accredited VET units and full courses in a range of industry areas
- dual CGEA and VET Certificates
- short VET courses
- VET traineeships
- VET community learning courses
- Aboriginal culture and language revival courses
- middle and senior schooling in independent schools run by some colleges.

Colleges deliver these options in various settings: in the colleges, in workplaces, in the community, in mainstream public schools and in juvenile justice centres.

Some examples of youth programs

Short examples of the work community colleges undertake with disadvantaged young people are outlined in this section of the report, with more detailed examples provided in the case-study section.

WORKING WITH YOUTH IN OR AT RISK OF ENTERING JUVENILE JUSTICE CENTRES

Example 1: Tuggerah Lakes Community College has been providing VET programs to young people in the Kariong Juvenile Justice Centre since 2003. They work with young people who are charged with or have been found guilty of very serious offences. The college delivers the Certificate I and II in Conservation Land Management and works with mainly Aboriginal students and students from non-English speaking backgrounds. The programs are run on a rotational basis to cater for events that disrupt regular attendance. College staff attend the Kariong Centre two days per week and focus on delivering skill-gap training. Outcomes from the training are good but attracting ongoing funding is an issue.

Example 2: Riverina Community College partners with Anglicare to implement programs relevant to the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002. The partnership helps prevent youth crime and reduce recidivism via arts and media-based diversion and prevention programs. The College also works with Shepherds Park Education and Training Unit within the Riverina Juvenile Justice Centre.

WORKING WITH YOUNG ABORIGINAL LEARNERS

Example 1: Riverina Community College has an Elsa Dixon Aboriginal Employment Program involving trainees in a VET Certificate II in Tourism, Certificate III in Music (technical production) and Hip Hop style workshops.

Example 2: Hunter Community College led a pilot program in 2010 with a cluster of colleges including Tomaree, Central Coast, Ourimbah, Singleton, Tuggerah Lakes and WEA Hunter (Newcastle). The pilot involved consulting with local Aboriginal communities to identify barriers to participation of Aboriginal learners in VET at Certificate III level and above. The project is developing processes and strategies to address barriers and reduce the educational gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Although the project is not youth specific it has the potential to provide improved services for young Aboriginal learners.

WORKING WITH YOUTH WHO HAVE NOT ACQUIRED SUFFICIENT BASIC SKILLS

Many community colleges provide the Certificate in General Education for Adults (CGEA) to build language, literacy and numeracy competency in combination with accredited VET units from various industry areas. It is suited to both mature-aged and younger learners.

Example: Albury-Wodonga Community College is providing language, literacy and numeracy support to young people who require assistance with basic skills as a supplement to their normal school activities. The program also targets young people who are early school leavers, underemployed or unemployed. In this program language, literacy and numeracy skills development is combined with a VET Certificate I in Community Services. The program focuses on developing general employability skills as well assisting students to move towards employment goals and/or undertake further education.

WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK OF DISENGAGING FROM SCHOOL

NSW community colleges can work effectively with young people who are still at school but who are at risk of disengaging. Colleges have formed partnerships with local high schools to help rekindle interest in learning among students who are not thriving in the mainstream school environment. Colleges are devising, and delivering, VET-oriented education programs linked to school study to help re-engage students back into the secondary school system.

Example 1: In 2010 Sydney City East Community College supported Aboriginal learners via a partnership with Alexandria Park Community School. The college program was delivered on school premises and utilised hands-on delivery methods through which boys in Years 11 and 12 learnt basic car maintenance via rebuilding vehicles and carrying out minor repairs.

Example 2: Murwillimbah Community College is building on its existing work with youth via a close partnership with nearby Wollumbin High School. The partnership aims to support disengaged students at the school. The community college is emphasising pathways planning and support for students via a case-management approach. Work began in 2010 with only 12 students but will be extended by the partners in 2011 to include more students and wider study options.

Example 3: Singleton Community College and Singleton High School have explored the type of collaborative programs they can develop to keep students connected with school-based learning.

Example 4: Community College Northern Inland Inc has undertaken an exploratory project to develop local partnerships involving four geographically diverse schools and to plan college options for disengaged young people in 2011.

Example 5: Camden Haven Community College is partnering with Camden Haven High School to introduce college run VET courses into the school timetable. Units from the Certificate III in Business Administration are being delivered to selected Aboriginal students in Year 11 and also to Year 10 students at risk of leaving school. The partners are planning further programs in 2011.

Example 6: ACE North Coast Inc has partnered with **Kadina High School** to encourage parents of Aboriginal students to engage with the school. The college is planning to run an Indigenous driver education program at the school for parents. This program will work in conjunction with the current after-school program for Aboriginal students and has the potential to engage parents and communities in the education of young people.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

NSW community colleges work in partnership with a wide variety of local agencies and this is considered a major strength when supporting young people who are not thriving in the school system. The range of service providers that community colleges work with include neighbourhood centres, youth services and networks, community services, disability and rehabilitation services, corrective services, indigenous services, migrant services, police youth clubs, Mission Australia, churches, Volunteers Australia, regional social development councils and Youth Connections. Almost half of the 22 colleges surveyed also have relationships with employers in order to provide structured workplace learning opportunities for young people. Many colleges also work with agencies such as Centrelink, job-employment services, local land councils and local governments. The common support services provided by colleges are listed in Table 5, with the number of colleges providing these services.

Guidance and support services	No. of colleges
Provision of individual career guidance	5
Individual education-to-work pathway planning	9
Mentoring on personal matters	7
Tutoring support such as literacy	14
Structured workplace learning opportunities	10
Community services learning opportunities	4
Job advocacy and local job referrals	3
Brokering and referral to required social services	7
Brokering and referral to financial supports	5
Case management	3

Table 5: Number of community colleges offering various support services

Enhancements to guidance and support systems

The community college network have enhanced youth guidance and support systems during 2010. They have concentrated on three major areas:

- 1 Individual career guidance and education-to-work pathways planning
- 2 Individual case management and referral systems
- 3 Pathways resource development involving broad community consultations to map available options and develop new opportunities to coherently integrated them

Example 1: Bryon Bay Community College led a pilot program with a cluster of northern NSW colleges including ACE North Coast, Lismore, Alstonville-Ballina, Grafton and Murwillumbah. The project aimed to incorporate career counselling and job-search skills into VET programs to improve student support and vocational outcomes. This project assisted both youth and mature-aged clients.

Example 2: WEA Hunter worked with several local high schools to assist young people at risk within the school system to map their potential to stay at school, secure further training or move into full-time employment. Schools identified students, who then attended the college in groups of two or three, where they developed Holistic Individual Pathway Plans (HIPPS). The students then returned to school and both organisations monitored and supported their progress using a case-management approach. Outcomes of the approach, along with useful templates and basic methodology, will be made available as a support kit and framework.

THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

NSW community colleges identified three main strengths that they bring to working with young people:

- 1 the range of learning options they offer
- 2 the use of targeted guidance and support services
- 3 the unique learning environment they foster

Community colleges offer a non-institutional, informal and non-threatening learning environment and work on the principle that the learner is the person in control of their learning. In what has been called a supportive adult learning environment, they support learners to raise personal expectations and to attain education and work goals.

Small class sizes mean colleges can offer a more personal approach. They tend to be flexible and their autonomy enables them to respond quickly to changing circumstances. Colleges are committed to achieving social inclusion and their staff are highly motivated to meet the needs of their clients.



SECTION 4

CASE STUDIES

This section provides four case studies of innovative practice in community colleges through which they provide schooling choices for young people who are not thriving in the mainstream school environment. Three of the case studies involve working with NSW public high schools. The case studies illustrate the use of the key good practice elements drawn from research which were presented in Section 2

Case study 1: Alesco Schools

Colleges	WEA Hunter ACE North Coast Tuggerah Lakes Community College
Innovation	Alternative schooling provided in Alesco Learning Centres to young people who are unable to maintain mainstream schooling
Benefits	Alesco comes from Latin and means to grow or to nourish. The Alesco independent schools run by NSW community colleges grow and nourish the most vulnerable of young people, assisting them to turn themselves around and create positive futures.
Partners	WEA Hunter is the auspice organisation of the Alesco learning centre model that provides accredited independent schools. Partners include: → a collaborative network of local social services agencies → local high schools that refer students → participating colleges that are mentored by WEA Hunter to implement Alesco Learning Centres The Alesco Learning Centres work with: → the NSW Board of Studies → the Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations
Program	Flexible delivery of secondary school core subjects combined with student welfare development
Students	Young people for whom mainstream schooling has not worked
Success factors	→ Deep commitment from the college and carefully chosen talented staff → Strong student support relating to emotional, physical and social needs as well as academic and vocational development → An environment based on an adult learning behaviour code adapted for the maturing person → Small class sizes
Potential	A positive alternative for students who cannot persist in mainstream schooling which provides a clear place within the NSW youth education-to-work transition system. Some colleges, with the assistance of WEA Hunter, have developed their own Alescos. Although Alesco schools are spreading, they are not necessarily an option for all community colleges.

WEA Hunter Alesco Learning Centre

The WEA Hunter Alesco Learning Centre caters to young people in Years 9 and 10 and Years 11 and 12. The College established the first Alesco independent school in 2002 in response to requests to accommodate students needing to complete school in an alternative schooling environment.

There were some local young people too young to go to TAFE so they were falling between the slats. There was also a group who, having successfully completed our Helping Early Leavers Program with excellent outcomes, wanted to go back to school but not back to what they had left or been thrown out of. So there was a demand for an alternative school model. Alesco became that model.

The Alesco educational philosophy and model has been fully researched and explicated in academic terms (WEA Hunter 2005). Golding (2009) referred to the approach as an eclectic psycho-educational program involving conventional secondary curriculum along with student-centered choices, welfare support and an adult learning environment. The Alesco philosophy emphasises the importance of forming strong respectful relationships with the young participants.

We do not see life circumstances as too hard for us to work through with and around. We have a welfare/academic balance philosophy and shift focus on an as-needed basis.

Alesco schools ask students to take greater responsibility for themselves and their own learning and at the same time offer students greater freedom. The levels of responsibility and freedom given are tailored to the developmental stages of adolescence.

At WEA Alesco we try to instill an understanding of consequences for poor choices associated with behaviours both individually and in the broader social or public contexts. Attention is also focused on preventing avoidance of responsibilities, particularly where the students' own learning is concerned. Students, when they enter, take a while to get used to our approach but by mid-year they settle and by Year 11 they usually are more self-determined, autonomous decision-makers and are leaders in the school requiring less (social) support.

An independent review of the school (Golding 2009) demonstrated that success rates for students (see Table 6) compare favourably with conventional school benchmarks, when the backgrounds of the students are taken into account.

Enrolments	75 enrolments in 55 available places
Average attendance	Ranged from 58.9% to 97.4%. 81.3% for students who completed the year.
Results	23 students graduated from the Year 10 School Certificate program. 5 students fully completed the Higher School Certificate program. 7 students partially completed the Higher School Education Program. 9 students completed the Year 9 Bridging Program.
Average retention	58.6%

Table 6: WEA Hunter Alesco Learning Centre students success rates

Alseco schools provide strong support to students by having youth welfare workers on staff and by referring to local social service agencies, when necessary. The relationships formed between the educator, support staff and the young person are a key ingredient to success.

WEA Alesco students work as a core crew in small classes. They form strong relationships with each other and the teachers and this keeps them engaged and enthusiastic. It works because they all work together to reach a common goal – their School Certificates. Good teachers are made in heaven as they are not trained in the no-power-and-control approach required in Alesco schools.

Northern Rivers Alesco Learning Centre

The Alesco Learning Centre – Northern Rivers is part of the ACE North Coast organisation and was established in 2006.

ACE North Coast had a large language literacy and numeracy program and over time noticed more and more young people, who should have been in school, were attending. They wanted to offer these kids a proper school equivalent option in an adult education setting.

The school provides students with the opportunity to complete their Year 10 School Certificate and then to move back to a mainstream school, move into work or take up another education and training pathway. Students sign up to a code of conduct which emphasises:

- respect for self, peers and staff
- responsibility for own learning, actions and reactions
- honesty with self and others

Staff believe that creativity and community involvement are important.

Alesco is all about offering students a wide range of creative, interesting and engaging educational experiences, including involvement in community-building projects.

In 2010 the Centre, in partnership with Youth Connections North Coast Inc, won a National Australia Bank 2010 Schools First Award for its Keeping Kool in School Project.

The students learn the Traffic Lights Model that helps them to recognise early warning signs and defuse situations before they become beyond their control. The judges said: This partnership will provide genuine opportunities for second-chance students. By modifying behaviour and improving educational outcomes this program will make a real difference in the students' lives.

ACE North Coast is working on a Strong Valid Referral and Pathways Framework with the local high school involving one-to-one career counselling and planning and case management to the identified pathway.

Central Coast Alesco Learning Centre

The Central Coast Alesco Learning Centre is new and is being auspiced by Tuggerah Lakes Community College. The Centre will open in 2011 and is anticipating enrolling 32 students in Year 9 and 32 students in Year 10. The Centre has grown out of a partnership between the college and the local Youth Connections Service.

Year 9 will be housed on the College premises and the classes split with 16 girls in one and 16 boys in the other. Year 10 classes will be gender combined, on the Youth Connections Green Central site – a social enterprise hub, which comprises a café, a Trade Skills Centre, an Indigenous vocational education centre, a media centre and other various enterprises for which the school will act as a feeder. Year 10 students will get a sense of life after school on this campus, while Year 9 students need a more therapeutic environment.

The Head Teacher and Principal of the Alesco Learning Centre Central Coast will report to an advisory committee made up of the chair and CEO of Youth Connections, Executive Officer and Vice Chair of the College Board and other members of the education community.

Other Alesco Learning Centres

The number of Alesco Learning Centres continues to grow with Albury -Wodonga Community College and WEA Illawarra also adopting the model. However this choice is not suited to all colleges and a range of decisions need to be made before choosing this option. Basic considerations include whether there is:

- a demonstrated need in the community
- a lack of local alternative schools to meet student demand
- support from local high schools
- top-level commitment within the college
- the ability to attract dedicated staff
- sufficient college infrastructure and resources to support the running of an independent school.

Three colleges from a sample of 22 colleges canvassed in the research for this report stated there is a demonstrated need in their communities for an Alesco Learning Centre and that they have the support of local high schools.

Case study 2: College and school partnerships

College	Central West Community College
Innovation	College programs run in conjunction with mainstream school programs in five public high schools in the Orange region for at-risk school students
Benefits	The College programs are opening the eyes of students to wider possibilities of where education can lead them and they are improving their self-confidence and motivation to progress in new-found directions.
Partners	The e2 network of schools in Orange, Molong and Blayney
Program & students	My Life My Choices Program combined with normal school attendance for Year 11 and 12 students who are at risk of disengaging from school The U-Turn 2 Learn Program for students who have missed a lot of schooling
Success factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → More adult, participatory and supportive learning environment → Ability of college to respond quickly to fill a gap in curriculum options → Ability of the college to customise programs to the learning and employment needs of at-risk youth → Skills of college trainer and his ability to engage and motivate students → Collaborative approach of the e2 network of schools and the college
Potential	<p>Program concentrates on improving self-confidence and motivation which assists students to progress in newly identified directions.</p> <p>Alternative programs provide a bridge between the world of school education and the more autonomous learning environment of TAFE.</p> <p>Focusing on job choices assists in moving students along suitable learning pathways.</p>

Working with five local high schools

Five high schools in the Orange region form the e2 network of schools. The schools – **Canobolas High School, Molong Central School, Blayney High School, Orange High School** and **Anson St School** (a school for Specific Purposes) – combine to provide innovative curriculum options including forming classes across the schools (Mitchell 2009). The network has good working relations with local TAFE campuses that deliver VET in schools and, since 2009, it has also worked with Central West Community College. The partnership with the college aims to broaden choices for students who are at risk of disengaging from school and to cater for those who would be challenged by an autonomous TAFE environment.

The College offers students two programs:

- 1 The *My Life My Choices* Program supports students to consider their own choices and to set future directions. This involves units of competency from the Certificate II in Business Services that count towards Year 11 and 12 outcomes and can increase the competitiveness of participants in the labour market. The program emphasises communication and students are encouraged to practise useful life and workplace communication skills. Members of the local workforce provide information on different local industries so students can start to think about possible work options.

The program involves close collaboration between the school and the community college where students attend the community college one day per week and go to school the other four days. The school must closely consider its timetable to accommodate this option. Students who may be suitable for the program are identified by the school, usually on the advice of year advisors or school principals. Seventy students participated in the program in 2010.

- 2 The *U-Turn 2 Learn* is a longer two-stage program targeting students who have missed a lot of schooling. It operates across regions including the e2 network. Stage I assists students to build life, learning and social skills while undertaking accredited language, literacy and numeracy training. In Stage II students transition to employment and work skills training undertaking accredited VET units. In 2010, ten students from the e2 network participated in the program.

In 2010, Central West Community College also developed a Student Transitions Program to further assist students in these programs. The college developed roles and resources to provide additional support for students and a number of tools to facilitate informed pathways planning. The college developed:

- a case-management role to support students with their individual learning and pathway plans and, where appropriate, the case manager can enlist the help of local services to support a student
- a resource which maps training and employment options in the region
- recommendations outlining how service providers in the region can work together to increase learning and employment pathways for secondary-school students
- a skills matrix indicating entry-level requirements for local industries.

In June 2010, twenty-four students graduated from the My Life, My Choices Program and four secured casual work as a direct result of their participation in the program. After graduation, some of the students intended to complete the Certificate II in Business Services with the college, others took up options with the local TAFE.

Case study 3: Creating positive school experiences for non-academic students

College	Kiama Community College
Innovation	College program run in conjunction with a mainstream school program at Kiama High School for Year 11 students needing motivation to stay in learning and a non-academic pathway
Benefits	The partnership is supporting a cultural shift around how Year 10 students returning to school comply with the new compulsory school leaving age.
Partners	Kiama Community College and Kiama High School
Program	VET Outdoor Recreation in combination with standard core school subjects
Students	Year 11 students needing motivation to stay in learning and complete a non-academic pathway
Success factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Top level commitment to the students by both partners → Employability skills embedded into a popular and enjoyable qualification for students → Action-learning approach adopted and willingness to make changes to the program as issues or problems arise
Potential	<p>College programs run in conjunction with mainstream schooling make the education received more relevant to students and can improve school retention rates.</p> <p>Development of local non-academic pathways broadens student choices for students who are at risk of disengaging from the school system</p>

College and High School working together

Kiama Community College has been working with young people in VET and other programs for thirteen years. Staff have a strong commitment to access education and to creating local partnerships to provide educational services in the Kiama area.

Early in 2010, Kiama Community College approached Kiama High School to see if a partnership could be formed to assist students affected by changes to the NSW school leaving age. The high school has an academic focus and a high retention rate but knew some students would be impacted by the change. Discussions between the organisations revealed they shared a common value base and both were committed to assisting a small group of students at the school, who would benefit from a non-academic pathway.

We agreed that a greater number of years of senior schooling can have a beneficial impact if this additional school experience is positive. Being left in a system that does not suit certain individuals and which can set them up for a continued sense of failure will not constitute an effective pathway.

To better accommodate the needs of these students, the partners developed a joint program where students attend normal schooling for four days a week and attend a college run program for the remaining day. On their day in the college students undertake the Certificate II Outdoor Recreation (Multiple Activities) delivered with a strong emphasis on employability skills. The college began working with 16 students as small class sizes were identified as important.

Training in outdoor recreation tends to appeal to young people and really grabs their interest ... it also opens up possibilities for local employment ... Electives in the Certificate II make it really flexible and you can really focus on developing general employability skills.

As the college points out infusing the program with employability skills is a key aspect.

We never take our eye off this aspect of the program because it builds the ability of the students to pursue any avenue of work they desire in the future.

To help optimise student outcomes, the program includes two main support features:

- 1 Individual pathway plans to help each student set and achieve learning and employment goals
- 2 Case management, which includes referral to services and organisations outside of the college who can better meet particular needs, to provide additional support on issues impacting on the students' ability to achieve their goals

The partners have agreed this is a good role for the college as the high school sees the need for such support but is hampered by the realities of time and resource constraints.

While Kiama High School recognises the benefits of individualised pathways and assistance, current career development resource realities do not enable this to happen. The addition of a case manager for those students at risk of not successfully transitioning to work or further study will provide the resources to give these students maximum opportunity to do so.

The college has begun to build a network of local employers to champion the new program. The role of employers is to provide work-placement opportunities and to assist students to confidently talk to employers.

Action-learning approach

To assist the partnership to work and to ensure both partners were actively involved in continuously developing and reviewing the new program, the partners used an action-learning approach through which problems could be identified and addressed as the program developed. One issue that the partnership grappled with was how to integrate the school program with the college program.

We found that our original idea of the students attending the college two days per week was not the best for their other school work. They have to complete five mainstream school subjects as well as the college course ... (so) we have cut back college attendance to one day a week from Term 2 and the program will run over a longer time and into Term 3 ... The school has had to make some adjustments to timetables and the classes in which our joint students participate. They are now all in the same senior secondary English class and Work Studies class and the teacher, who works closely with the College, helps them to catch up on anything they've missed with their school subjects. We have the students attending the college on the school sports program day. We know how we would do it from the beginning next time.

The case management aspect of the program also proved challenging and was not able to commence at the beginning of the year.

We had trouble working out times students could meet with the case manager and do their pathway planning ... we are trying to give them as much individual support as possible so they can transition to what's next ... We are looking for additional classroom time for transition management activities and other possibilities.

The College believes student retention rates would have been improved if a case management system had been in place from the beginning of the program. Of the initial 16 students, 10 students remained to the end of the first semester and six students are likely to complete the joint program.

The Kiama Community College and Kiama High School partnership is supporting a cultural shift around keeping young people engaged in education and training. Whilst 2010 was a year of transition, 2011 will see the alternative college VET learning options fully integrated into the school's offerings and timetables. Kiama Community College and Kiama High School are committed to entering a formalised partnership to jointly support young students, who otherwise might not make a successful transition to employment or further study, to stay in school.

The joint program has attracted the attention of other high schools in the region and the partners have shared relevant information to assist other schools to take a more planned approach to supporting students who are not thriving in the mainstream school environment.

Case study 4 : Engaging the community to lift student retention and outcomes

College	Western College
Innovation	Community engagement project initiated with several high schools in Central and Far West NSW to develop a more strategic approach to youth retention.
Partners	Western College and the communities and high schools in Bourke, Brewarrina, Lightning Ridge, Nyngan and Walgett.
Program	Collaboration with local communities to keep young people engaged in school or other education enhancing their ability to gain employment.
Students	Early school leavers and those at risk of leaving school early.
Success factors	Community engagement is critical to ensure the success and sustainability of youth-at-risk programs, especially within Aboriginal communities.
Potential	A more strategic approach to lifting youth education participation rates in the region. A whole-of-community approach to action and planning where the community assists young people to achieve in the education and training system.

Working with regional schools

School retention rates are relatively low in the (statistically) disadvantaged population of Western NSW. The area is vast and has a large Aboriginal population. Here Western College has been working with early school leavers for around ten years, offering well supported vocationally oriented courses. The college has also received *Links to Learning Program* funding from the NSW Department of Education and Training but available resources are not sufficient to meet the needs of the number of young people requiring assistance to stay engaged with education and training.

Out here we tend to lose a lot of kids at the start of Year 9 (and some earlier) and again at the start of Year 11 ... The local TAFEs do not offer courses to young people under 17 years of age who are not in school ... we have a small Links to Learning Program for sixty kids and a waiting list of thirty ... Principals in this region are always looking for ways to help students and have them stay on in education ... The TAFEs do run VET in schools programs but the TAFE environment can be challenging for non-motivated or reluctant learners ... we wanted to do something to help this group of kids ... the more options there are available the more kids we will be able to help.

To further assist young people in the region, the college and local schools decided to work together in two ways:

- 1 The community college and the schools would begin to establish VET in schools projects to add to options available through local TAFE colleges.
- 2 The community college would undertake a community consultation process to engage the community in educational issues.

The College developed a partnership with **Bourke High School** to offer units from the Certificate III in Home and Community Care. Health and community-related qualifications can help meet the needs of local Aboriginal people who require Aboriginal workers in local services. Students who undertake the units have a potential pathway to a range of community-care qualifications offered by TAFE and career planning is included in the study.

The career planning is an important element to allow participants to define their own future employment and/or training pathway in a supportive and structured environment ... it helps get commitment from the community and the individual who is studying ... local (health) service providers are part of the program providing support to participants.

Whole-of-community consultation process

In 2010 Western College initiated a project involving a whole-of-community consultation process. The project, which involved several regional high schools, developed an action plan to keep young people in school or alternative education and improve potential employment outcomes. The College coordinated the consultation process, with schools identifying suitable venues for consultations and assisting communication with students, parents and other community stakeholders through newsletters.

A report based on the consultations aims to identify:

- available resources and infrastructure in each community, to support VET options and continuing education
- gaps in training for young people and requirements for entry into local job markets
- barriers to participation in education and training for local Aboriginal young people and local solutions to overcome them
- suitable school/community college partnership programs for 2011 and beyond
- a sustainable framework for ongoing community consultation

Western College sees the consultation process as a way to develop educational programs more relevant to students who do not want to stay on at school. Evidence suggests there is a need for more short-term solutions via short courses providing tangible outcomes. This could include Statements of Attainment which give students such things as a drivers licence, barista skills or an occupational health and safety certificate. Communities suggested there is room for programs which involve the parents of school students. Here there is a need for both parents and young people to develop more literacy skills as well as possibilities with other programs such as driver education.

The community collaborative approach adopted by the college has the potential to develop more inclusive solutions to ongoing education issues in remote Central and Far Western NSW.

Strengthening the approach in 2011

Work undertaken in 2010 has resulted in a 2011 pilot program for the Dubbo region. PeP (Partnership Education Program) sees schools, TAFE, Western College, Centacare and Mission Australia working together to create options for students who are not keen on completing years 9 and 10 in the traditional way. The pilot caters to twenty students who will attend school two days a week, Western College two days a week and TAFE Western for the remaining one day per week. Individualised case management will also be available to the students.



SECTION 5

ROLES FOR NSW COMMUNITY COLLEGES

This section draws conclusions on how NSW community colleges can assist young people to stay engaged in education and training. It identifies existing barriers and areas for community colleges to develop to more fully engage with youth education and training programs.

WE KNOW WHAT WORKS: IT'S A MATTER OF MAKING IT WORK

Drawing on previous research and current examples, this study shows a one-size-fits-all approach to youth education will not work. The education system must be diverse enough to ensure all young people achieve sufficient initial education to make a successful transition to stable work. Assisting students to successfully stay on at school requires thinking outside the box from standard senior secondary school programs. Young people have the best chance of success if they have a choice of study options, learning environments and customised guidance and support systems.

Mainstream schooling and the TAFE system have undergone major reforms to improve their ability to meet the needs of all young people. However schools and TAFE may not be the most appropriate choices for some young people, especially the more vulnerable. Some young people require programs that sit somewhere in between school and the more autonomous world of TAFE.

Community colleges in NSW have transformed themselves over the past decade to encompass a wide range of accredited VET study options, as well as providing more traditional community-learning opportunities. They provide a unique, highly supportive adult-learning environment that is different to both schools and TAFE. They have structures and systems to nurture and respond to the needs of vulnerable young people and any young person wishing to pursue a VET pathway. They have developed, and continue to develop, partnerships with local stakeholders and local services and tend to have excellent profiles within their local communities. However the effective integration of college options with school programs and TAFE pathways is in the early stages of development.

ROLES FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Overall, this study identifies four roles for NSW community colleges in an effective youth education-to-work transition system:

- 1 Re-engagement role** working with young people who have disengaged from school by providing alternative schools, VET delivery and community learning programs within flexible and highly supported learning environments
- 2 Early intervention role** working with at-risk school students by providing combined college and school education programs and/or enhanced one-to-one guidance and support not able to be provided by the school
- 3 Facilitation role** in integrating local education options including:
 - whole-of-local-community planning to further develop options for local youth
 - integrated options requiring a student tracking system to ensure intervention and support is provided as needed and the student does not get lost when being passed from one organisation to another
- 4 Mainstream role** in VET in schools and general VET outside of schools – here community colleges tend to have a smaller range of options than TAFE but may be able to provide additional supports to students such as case management not always available in the TAFE environment, although it should also be noted that some duplication in programs across the VET sector has been encouraged to achieve competitive and responsive VET provision

Twenty-two community colleges, which participated in a survey for this report, outlined things they would like to do for youth programs:

- All 22 colleges would like to do more to assist at-risk youth.
- Eleven colleges would like to increase delivery of VET or accredited language, literacy and numeracy courses.
- Eleven colleges would like to increase support services such as career planning and mentoring, through employing a youth specialist.
- Four colleges mentioned partnership building and school partnerships in particular as important in helping young people.

BARRIERS TO EMBRACING EDUCATION-TO-WORK TRANSITION ROLES

Colleges were asked what impeded them from fully embracing youth program opportunities. Their responses centered around two themes:

1 Lack of recognition

Community colleges are generally viewed as organisations working only with adults. However they do in fact have a role to play with anyone 15 years and over. The research demonstrates community colleges are highly involved in youth programming and that young people are a significant proportion of community college clientele. Schools and TAFE colleges are not necessarily aware of the diversity of roles that community colleges do or can play or how community colleges might fit in with developing a range of options catering to different needs.

2 Resource constraints

Community colleges, which often work with the most disadvantaged members within a community, draw their funding from a range of sources. They receive annual accredited VET program funding from the NSW Government and to assist young people they also apply for funds from:

- the Social Inclusion Program funded by the Adult and Community Education Unit in NSW DET
- the Links to Learning Program funded by NSW DET
- NSW schools funding for independent schools, schools inside juvenile centres and support funding for children in residential care

Colleges also tender for other government funds including:

- fee-for-service funding from Youth Services job agencies
- Department of Immigration and Citizenship grants
- Indigenous education grants

Colleges also seek out community funds where possible eg:

- Anglicare - Proceeds of Crime Act 2002
- Phoenix Program with Coal and Allied Trust
- Australia Post community grants
- Bridgeman Ridge Community Trust
- Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal - Stretching the Envelope grants

Lack of ongoing funding restricts the capacity of colleges to provide the longer-term programs and support required by the most disadvantaged young people, and to plan strategically to grow their youth education-to-work services. Funding received is insufficient, given the amount of resources needed to work effectively with at-risk youth. The adequacy of funding levels for programs to support the engagement of disadvantaged people in learning is well documented.

To achieve inclusiveness by involving those disadvantaged in learning, takes more than seed funding – the common approach to date. Many equity programs remain stuck in the seeding stage and fail to thrive and grow because current funding approaches place too much emphasis on starting initiatives and not enough on the development and scale-up of promising ones. Lack of sufficient funds to fully support disadvantaged learners is a commonly raised issue. A rethink of the funding mechanisms currently used is needed if we are to stimulate innovative equity practice. (Figgis et al 2007)

NVEAC (2010) has suggested that a new funding mechanism for social inclusion should recognise the true cost of delivery for disadvantaged learners, as the unit costs for these learners to achieve a similar outcome to other learners is higher. For community colleges, one of the ways costs become higher is through employing youth support workers to coordinate welfare support services for the more vulnerable young people.

CONCLUSION

This report shows community colleges are working to develop approaches to youth education and have a valuable role to play. Community colleges can offer a diversity of program approaches and are highly suited to working with young people who are not yet ready for a mainstream TAFE pathway.

Importantly the number of partnerships with local high schools is increasing, providing a safety net for young people who might otherwise be lost in the system. School and community college partnerships are important in ensuring the benefits of changes to the NSW school leaving age are extended to all students.

Greater recognition of the strategic roles NSW community colleges can play with regard to youth may bring longer-term sustainable funding. If the common aim is to see all young people complete senior schooling or its equivalent vocational certificate III and progress into sustainable work, then the youth education funding system needs to be linked to the students and supplied for their preferred and most appropriate pathway. Governments will also need to supply sufficient funds for vulnerable young people who require extra services.



SECTION 6

REFERENCES

- Alesco Learning Centre WEA Hunter retrieved 5 May 2010 from http://www.dsf.org.au/learningchoices/program_info.php?id=65
- Alesco Learning Centre WEA Hunter 2008 Annual Report
- Alesco Learning Centre Northern Rivers 2008 Annual Report
- Anlezark, A. (forthcoming). *At risk youth: a transitory state?* Adelaide: NCVER
- AQF Council. 2010. *The Australian Qualifications Framework* (pending MCTEE approval 2010) Adelaide: AQF Secretariat
- Bowman, K. 2006. *The value of ACE providers*. Adult Learning Australia, Canberra
- Bowman, K. 2010. *Framework for the development of an ACE social inclusion strategy*. Canberra: National ACE Action Group
- CEDEFOP. 2010. *Guiding at-risk youth through learning to work: Lessons from across Europe*. Thessaloniki (Pylea), Greece: European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
- Central West Community College and the e2 network. 2010. Funding submission and progress report to the ACE Unit NSW DET
- Council of Australian Governments. July 2009. *The national partnership on youth attainment and transitions*. Canberra
- Curtis, D. & J. McMillan. 2008. *School non-completers: Profiles and initial destinations*. Camberwell Victoria Australia: ACER
- Davis, W., L. Forstadt & R. Lee. 2006. *Maine drop-out prevention guide*. Institute for the Study of Students At Risk – College of Education and Human Development University of Maine Shibles Hall Orono – ME 04469-5766 <http://www.umaine.edu/issar>
- Dusseldorp Skills Forum. 2009. *How Young People are Fairing -full report*. Sydney: Dusseldorp Skills Forum
- Dwyer, P. 1996. *Opting out: early school leavers and the degeneration of youth policy*, Australian Clearing House for Youth Studies University of Tasmania (copies still available as of 10 February 2010 at www.acys.utas.edu.au).
- Fergusson, A. & S. Young. 2005. *The evaluation of the South Australia works learn2earn program*. South Australia. Adelaide: Dept of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology (DFEEST)
- Figgis, J., A. Butorac, B. Clayton, D. Meyers, M. Dickie, J. Malley & R. McDonald. 2007. *Advancing equity: merging 'bottom up' initiatives with 'top down' strategies*. Adelaide: NCVER
- Golding, B. 2009. *Education that works: a comprehensive research evaluation of the Alesco Learning Centre to 2009*. Newcastle: WEA Hunter
- Halperin. M. N. 2006. *Whatever it takes: How twelve communities are reconnecting out of school youth*. American Youth Policy Forum
- Hattie J. A. 2003. *Teachers make a difference: what is the research evidence?* Camberwell Victoria Australia: ACER Research Conference
- Helme, S., J. Polesel, R. Teese, T. Nicholas & A. Walstab. 2005. *Raising expectations: Improving student retention in NSW schools*. Centre for post-compulsory education and lifelong learning, University of Melbourne
- Hillman, K. 2005. *The first year experience: The transition from secondary school to university and TAFE in Australia*. (LSAY Research Report No 4)
- House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training. 2009a. *Report of the inquiry into combining school and work: supporting successful youth transitions*. Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra
- House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training. October 2009b. *Adolescent overload? Report of the inquiry into combining school and work: supporting successful youth transitions*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia
- Institute for the Study of Students at risk – Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia. 2004. *Students at risk: analysis of major issues involving identification, effective programming, and dropout prevention strategies*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia
- University of Maine sighted at <http://www.umaine.edu/issar/sar.htm>
- Institute for the Study of Students at risk. 2006. *Maine preventing school drop out guide*. University of Maine
- James, S. 2005. *Connecting marginalised young people with education, training and employment*. International Social Policy Conference: University of Melbourne, Centre for Public Policy
- Janosz, M., M. LeBlanc, B. Boulerice & R. E.Tremblay. 2000. *Predicting different types of school dropouts: A typological approach with two longitudinal samples*. Journal of Educational Psychology, 92 (1)
- Kellock, P. 2005. *Local investment: National returns. The case for community support for early school leavers*. A Report on the National Youth Commitment Partnerships and Project Dusseldorp Skills Foundation (available at <http://www.dsf.org.au>)
- Lamb, S., R. Rumberger, D. Jesseon & R. Teese. 2004. *School performance in Australia: Results from analyses of school effectiveness*. Melbourne: Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet
- Lietz, P. 2009. *Variance in performance between students within schools and between schools*. Camberwell Victoria Australia: ACER for Commonwealth of Australia
- Long, M. 2006. *The flipside of Gen Y*. Sydney: Dusseldorp Skills Forum
- McMillan, J. & G. N. Marks. 2003. *School Leavers in Australia: Profiles and pathways*. LSAY Research Report Number 31. Melbourne: ACER.
- Ministerial Council on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs. 2008. *Ministerial Declaration on Adult and Community Education*. Canberra: MCEETYA

- Mitchell, J. 2009. *Benefits of the new school leaving age: How innovation within NSW secondary public schools underpins student success*. Sydney: NSW Department of Education and Training
- Mitchell, J. 2009. Case study 7 – e2 delivers options and opportunities in *Benefits of the new school leaving age: How innovation within NSW secondary public schools underpins success*. Sydney: NSW Department of Education and Training pp 52-56
- Moyle, K. & S. Owen. 2009. *Listening to students' and educators' voices: research findings*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia
- Nguyen, N. 2010 *The impact of VET in schools on the intentions and achievements of young people*. Briefing paper No. 21. Adelaide: NCVER
- NSW Government. 2007. *Community education in NSW: A statement by the NSW Government on directions for community education*. www.ace.nsw.gov.au
- NSW Education Amendment Act No. 25. 2009. *An Act to amend the Education Act 1990 to change the school leaving age*. [Assented to 19 May 2009]
- National Australia Bank 2010. Schools First Awards. *Seed funding award to Alesco Learning Centre Northern Rivers (NSW ACE North Coast College)* <http://www.schoolsfirst.edu.au/sf-2010-schools/alesco-learning-centre-northern-rivers.php>
- National VET Equity Group Advisory Council (NVEAC), 2010. *Equity blueprint – creating futures: achieving potential through VET*. Discussion paper (20 August). Melbourne: TVET Australia
- OECD. 2007. *Overcoming school failure: policies that work*. Paris: OECD
- OECD. 2002. *Review of career guidance policies: Australia country note*. Paris: OECD
- OECD. 1999. *The transition from initial education to working life*. Paris: OECD
- Office for Youth. 2009. *State of Australia's young people*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia
- Pech, J., A. McNevin & L. Nelms. 2009. *Young people with poor labour force attachment: a survey of concepts, data and previous research*. Melbourne: Australian Fair Pay Commission Secretariat
- Phillips K. P. A. 2006. *Planning for the provision of VET and ACE for young people*. A report for the Victorian Learning and Employment Skills Commission, State of Victoria
- Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Taskforce. 2001. *Footprints to the future*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia
- South Australia Department of Education and Children's Services. 2004. *Innovative community action networks*. Adelaide: SA DECS
- Stanwick, J. 2005. *Australian Qualifications Framework lower-level qualifications: Pathways to where for young people?* Adelaide: NCVER
- Teese, R., J. Polesel & K. Mason. 2003. *The destinations of school leavers in Victoria*. Melbourne: Victorian Department of Education and Training
- The Equity Centre WEA Hunter* at <http://www.weahunter.com.au/profile.asp>
- The Alesco Learning Centre Northern Rivers* extracted 15 May 2010 from <http://www.australianschoolsdirectory.com.au/school.php?school=25>
- Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. April 2010. *Pathways to re-engagement through flexible learning options: A policy direction for consultation*. Melbourne: Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
- Volkoff, V. & A. Walstab. 2007. *Setting the scene: Investigating learning outcomes with a view to the future*. Report to the ACFE Board Victoria Centre for Post-compulsory Education and Lifelong Learning – University of Melbourne
- Walstab, A., V. Volkoff & R. Teese. 2005. *ACE connects: building pathways to education, employment and community engagement: ACE longitudinal study-survey*. Centre for Post-Compulsory Education and Lifelong Learning – University of Melbourne
- WEA Hunter. 2005. *Education philosophy the Alesco Learning Centre*, Document 4
- Woods, D. 2007. *The role of VET in helping young people's transition into work: at a glance*. Adelaide: NCVER
- Wyn, J., H. Stokes & D. Tyler. 2004. *Stepping stones: TAFE and ACE program development for early school leavers*. Adelaide: NCVER



